

agined. It required a vast deal of minutiae and personal observation, which a board of directors could never discharge. He went against a board of directors, or any other board, whatever be its name, because it always created a divided responsibility. He heard a very intelligent gentleman of the city of Baltimore say, years ago, that the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company would get along better, had they three directors instead of thirty.

He (Mr. D.) had met gentlemen in these boards. They usually meet and discuss the politics of the day, and various other topics, or introduce some amusement to while away the time. Divide the responsibility and duty failed. Would any gentleman carry this to practical life, and say that he was not right? What was the true course? In 1847, (he hoped it would not be deemed arrogance in him to speak of himself,) representing the interests of the State for the small salary of one hundred dollars, he asked gentlemen to go to the records and tell him whether there had been a neglect of duty. He was then placed upon a committee to examine, as the charter required, into the proceedings of the company for the preceding year. In his report he ventured to make this suggestion. He would ask attention to it, because, in his judgment, it laid down the true theory for the management of any and every enterprise of this character.

The following was the report of the committee of which he was chairman :

"This proposition, in substance, is to place the supervision of the entire finished portion of the canal in the immediate superintendence and charge of the chief engineer of the company, subject, however, to such restrictions as the board might deem necessary to impose. This measure, if carried into effect upon a liberal and enlightened basis, the committee are persuaded will be attended with important advantages to the company. A work of such magnitude as the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, demands almost as high professional skill for its preservation as for its original construction, and when it is recollected the injury to which the eastern division of the canal has of late been subjected by freshets in the Potomac, the damage to dams and frequent giving way of culverts, causing interruptions to navigation, loss of revenue and large expenditures for repairs, it is of the utmost importance that there should be an officer of character, skill and experience, detailed to supervise and watch over the condition of the work and manage its police. A timely application of labor and money will, most generally, arrest injuries, which, if suffered to progress, will require thousands to repair; for, it is well known to all persons at all acquainted with canals, that breaks seldom occur without first giving warning of their approach. It is impossible to expect a board of directors scattered all over the State, and engaged in their own private business, even if they possessed the professional skill, to devote that attention necessary to supervise the detailed operations of a work like this, even were they con-

stantly in session, and all professional engineers, from their remoteness from the work, their variety of sentiment and the division of responsibility, neglect and loss would still, in too many instances, be the result. Talent and intelligence to be practically useful, must be concentrated; when diffused, its influence is weakened and its power lost. So well understood is this by the Bostonians, that they never attempt an enterprise of this kind without first selecting an agent qualified to manage it, and upon him they fix the responsibility of its success; and hence, the great productiveness of all of their works, both public and private. Their example, too, is being followed in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. It would, however, be folly to create such an office unless power and authority were vested in the officer to carry out and enforce such a system of management as would insure the execution of his plans. If he abuses his trust, the board have their remedy in the power of removal, but so long as faithful to his duty and skilful in his management, his arm should be strengthened and his authority maintained. No better selection, in the estimation of the committee, could be made than that indicated in the proposition on the records of the board. The talent and high professional skill of Mr. Fisk are widely acknowledged, and he has proved his devotion to the canal by years of patient and untiring labor for its final accomplishment. Besides the bettered condition of the canal and the improved system of police, there would be economy in the arrangement, as it would relieve the President and Directors of a large portion of their duties and render their meetings less frequent and protracted."

This was his recommendation, submitted to the stockholders of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal company, in 1847. He was glad to learn that the very first official act of his respected friend from Prince George's, [Mr. Sprigg,] recently elected president of the company, was to carry out this very suggestion. In addition to the examples he had already cited from Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, he had before him the report of the canal board of commissioners of the State of New York, for the last year. He found that the board was composed of three members, and that they divided the work among themselves. One had charge of three hundred and seventy miles, another had charge of three hundred and twenty miles, and another of three hundred and seventy-three miles. He mentioned this to prove that New York had carried out, long before the recommendation was made, the system of concentrating the executive duties of these works upon single minds, for the reason which he hoped he had satisfactorily stated. The moment the present President of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad company, was elected, what was his first business? It was to go to Massachusetts, and get a gentleman of great intelligence and experience to come and take charge of a certain part of the business of the company. He would read a few headings of the items of that gentleman's report, to show his duties. First, he reported the expenses of the road department; the next item was in relation